

Army Engineers Support Reconstruction in Iraq

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) provided engineering and technical assistance to the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) for military operations. With hostilities now largely over, USACE is supporting CENTCOM, the Department of Defense Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) and the U.S. State Department with reconstruction efforts.

USACE has the mission of restoring oil production in Iraq. The first step, during the early war phase, was extinguishing oil fires and preventing further damage from fires or spilling oil. The second phase will be to provide environmental remediation of oil damage, and to restore oil production, refining and gasoline processing.

USACE has three engineers who support ORHA by serving as advisors for the Ministries of Electricity; Water and Irrigation; and Housing and Construction. USACE teams assess Iraqi infrastructure systems and provide recommendations and technical assistance for repair and reconstruction. These teams consist of military and civilian engineers from a broad spectrum of technical disciplines.

The Corps of Engineers is also providing technical assistance to the Department of State's Bureau of Oceans, Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES). OES is drafting a plan of action on environmental security and health in Iraq. A large portion of this plan will be on water resources management in Iraq, to include the possible restoration of the Mesopotamian Marshes, largely destroyed by Saddam Hussein's regime. The desiccation of these marshes over the last several years is viewed by the world as an environmental catastrophe.

USACE is using its relations with the World Water Council and UNESCO to gather data on Iraqi water resources and infrastructure. USACE is also using these resources to support training of Iraqi engineers and scientists in coordination with the Department of State and the National Academy of Sciences. USACE connections with the World Water Council may also prove invaluable in developing long term water management plans in the Tigris and Euphrates River basins with Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran.

We are once again being reminded how important the Corps' peacetime Civil Works and Military Construction missions are in providing a cadre of well trained and versatile professionals who can quickly mobilize in both peacetime and wartime emergencies.